

ND Gets Ready To Unleash Rural Health Funds

By Mike Moen,
Prairie News Service

Rural health leaders in North Dakota are eager to see new investments to boost access to care after the state authorized the use of new federal funds.

All U.S. states are getting started on an initial wave of aid under the Rural Health Transformation Program approved by Congress last summer. It will provide \$50 billion over the next five years, and North Dakota will see \$200 million in the first year. With the legislature giving the green light last week, providers and organizations working on solutions are eyeing the grant application process.

Jacob Warren, director of the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota, is confident the rural health care workforce will see more stability.

"That is a really unifying theme that we hear as we work with hospitals, clinics, and other providers across the state of North Dakota," Warren observed. "The ability to rethink how we do recruitment, to focus in on how we retain the providers that we are able to recruit."

He pointed out when a rural hospital has trouble hiring a medical professional for a certain type of care, it loses revenue because it has to drop the service. Nationally,

health researchers and advocates label the fund as a "band-aid" in offsetting cuts tied to Medicaid changes approved in the same law. Warren acknowledged the changes create pressure but feels the investments can still be effective.

Another area targeted for investment is technology, and Warren sees opportunities to boost telehealth. For example, he noted there is a possibility of bringing providers to rural areas, and they can do virtual visits with patients in many surrounding areas.

"The reason that we don't always have, say, for instance, an OB in a smaller community is they don't have the patient volume they need in that small community," Warren emphasized. "But telehealth can be a way for specialists to actually establish practice in a rural area and their patient panel through telehealth."

He added it means there would not have to be an overreliance on urban providers doing virtual visits for patients hundreds of miles away. The state Health and Human Services Department hinted grant applications could open up as early as next month. To create awareness, the governor's office said listening sessions, technical assistance calls and other outreach activities are being planned.

American Malting Barley Association Releases Recommended Variety List

The American Malting Barley Association (AMBA) Board of Directors annually develops list of recommended malting barley varieties for U.S. growers for the upcoming crop year. AMBA is a nonprofit trade organization, which represents the interests of end users of malting barley, including maltsters, brewers, distillers, and food processors. Their work seeks to maintain a stable and high quality supply of malting barley for their nearly fifty members throughout the U.S.

The AMBA Recommended List is intended to provide U.S. growers with guidance as to what varieties the industry may be contracting or purchasing in the coming year. It is not intended as a list of approved or certified malting varieties for the use by brewers, distillers, food companies, or maltsters. There may be many suitable malting barley varieties grown domestically or internationally that are not on the list, yet have quality characteristics desired by the industry. Some varieties will be used in large quantities, and many others are only utilized in niche markets, so producers are encouraged to contact their local elevator, grain handler, or processor to gauge market demand for any variety grown in their region prior to seeding.

The only addition to the 2026 list is ABI Montana, brought forth for recommendation from ABInBev. ABI Montana is a spring, two-row malting barley variety intended

for adjunct brewing. It is primarily adapted to dryland and low irrigation production systems in northwest Montana. It has competitive yield, test weight, and kernel plumpness with earlier harvest maturity and improved malting characteristics compared to other varieties grown in the target region. Notably, ABI Montana carries the high thermostability form of β -amylase.

Three varieties were removed from the list due to their declining acreage, all released by ABInBev: spring six-row Celebration and two spring two-rows, Conrad and Merit 57.

With these changes, the list of recommended malting barley varieties for 2026 is as follows:

Spring Varieties

AAC Connect, AC Metcalfe, Explorer, Mayflower, Newdale
AAC Synergy, BC Leandra, Firefoxx, Moravian 69, Tradition*
ABI Cardinal, Bill Coors 100, Hockett, Moravian 164
ABI Eagle, CDC Churchill, Lacey*, Moravian 165
ABI Montana, CDC Copeland, LCS Genie, Moravian 170
ABI Raptor, CDC Fraser, LCS Odyssey, Moravian 179
ABI Voyager, Expedition, Legacy*, ND Genesis

Winter Varieties

Avalon, Flavia, LCS Violetta, Regina, Thunder
Endeavor, KWS Donau, Puffin, Thoroughbred*, Wintmalt
*Six-row varieties



Cramer Commends VA Secretary Collins On Reducing Backlog

The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee heard testimony from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) leadership about how proposed changes to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) would affect veterans in North Dakota and the rest of the nation. The VA recently announced the Restructure for Impact and Sustainability Effort (RISE) initiative to reorganize the VHA over the next 18-24 months, aiming to reduce bureaucracy and deliver better outcomes for veterans.

U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND) commended VA Secretary Doug Collins about the massive decrease in VA's benefits backlog and discussed expanding access to care for veterans, including his legislation with U.S. Senator Tim Sheehy (R-MT), the Critical Access for Veterans Care Act.

Cramer presented a poster showcasing the VA's benefits backlog between the Biden administration and the Trump administration. When Secretary Collins came into office, Cramer said he immediately began working through the massive mess he inherited from President Biden and has decreased the backlog by sixty percent, a drop from 264,000 claims to 105,000 in just one year. "There is no way that you could've made the agency so efficient that you could come into this mess with 264,000 backlogs and turn that into 105,000 in one year," Cramer said.

Cramer asked Secretary Collins how the department was able to achieve this rapid reduction in the backlog.

"It was put forth by our [Veterans Benefit Administration], who actually came to us and said, 'We can do better than this,'" said Secretary Collins. "125 days is our standard for a backlog claim. In other words, it has to be 125 days before it even goes on the backlog. So, think about that for a minute. This had grown up exponentially over time, and also, by the way, when I first came in last year at 264,000, there was also over a million claims in the pipeline. That now number is closer to 600,000 to 550,000 in the pipeline."

Secretary Collins said the agency has not only been able to reduce the backlog, but it has reduced the total claims number as well while also providing transparency and accuracy in the claim's appeals process. He added how "That's just a win for veterans."

Cramer presented a second poster, which highlighted the twenty-five new VA clinics which have opened across the country over the past year, providing more options for veterans seeking care. He said, "Twenty-five VA clinics have opened since January 20 of last year. So once again, backlogs are down, employee numbers evidently are down, and yet there's twenty-five more VA clinics." Secretary Collins agreed, saying he wants to see more of this because VA is expanding access and improving the experience for veterans.

Cramer then pointed out the relationship between the two new clinics in North Dakota, located in Williston and Grand Forks, which are 333 miles apart, and his bill with

Senator Sheehy, the Critical Access for Veterans Care Act. The bill would allow veterans living in rural America to seek health care services at local Critical Access Hospitals or Rural Health Clinics. The North Dakota Rural Health Association and a coalition of twenty-two rural health care providers across North Dakota submitted letters of support for Cramer's legislation. The bill is also supported by the American Hospital Association, America's Warrior Partnership, and the National Rural Health Association. There are thirty-seven Critical Access Hospitals in towns across North Dakota, but only five of those communities also have a VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

"We have all these communities far from a CBOC or a hospital," added Cramer. "We would, as you know, in our legislation, like to utilize these critical access hospitals in a more efficient way that makes them better and provides better care to that local veteran."

Secretary Collins said he completely agreed, and VA Under Secretary of Health John Bartrum said he's asked the team to look at what, if any, restrictions are there for them to do some of our leases with the Community Access Hospitals. Bar-

trum said he believes "it is a double win because it helps support the facility itself, and then it supports our veterans where they are and partnering with them to be part of our TPA network or our clinical

network."

"Well, Mr. Undersecretary, I'm just glad that we could reduce our backlog here at the United States Senate of confirmations for you as well," concluded Cramer.

2026 NDSU Soybean Symposium Set

Researchers, Extension professionals, students and industry partners are invited to participate in the 2026 North Dakota State University Soybean Symposium on Thursday, March 5 at NDSU's Memorial Union in Fargo, North Dakota. The symposium is a forum dedicated to advancing soybean research, management and innovation across the Midwest.

The event will feature research presentations, student competitions and networking opportunities, and it is supported by the North Dakota Soybean Council and industry partners.

The symposium will include oral and poster presentations spanning three major focus areas: agronomy, plant pathology and new-uses research. Graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and research staff are encouraged to submit abstracts for a chance to present their work and compete for cash prizes. The abstract submission deadline is February 5.

"This symposium is an important venue for connecting research with real-world soybean produc-

tion challenges," says Ana Carcedo, NDSU Extension broadleaf crops agronomist and symposium organizer. "It provides an opportunity to share new findings, foster collaboration across disciplines and support student professional development."

The 2026 program will feature keynote presentations from Shawn Conley, University of Wisconsin-Madison state soybean and small grain specialist; Dylan Mangel, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension plant pathologist; and Ignacio Ciampitti, co-director of Purdue University's Institute for Digital and Advanced Agricultural Systems. Speakers will share perspectives on translating cutting-edge soybean science into practical, field-level applications.

In addition to technical sessions, the symposium will provide opportunities for attendees to network with researchers, Extension professionals, farmers and industry representatives.

Additional details, including abstract submission guidelines and deadlines, are available at nodsu.ag/soybeansymp26.

Proceedings Of The Mountrail County Planning Commission

MINUTES MOUNTRAIL COUNTY PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION DECEMBER 22, 2025

The meeting of the Mountrail County Planning & Zoning Commission was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chairman Charlie Sorenson with Commissioners Trudy Ruland, Cameron Tomjack, Joan Hollekim, Arlo Borud, Jesse Weyrauch and Megan Fritel present. The board welcomed newly appointed Commissioner Darren LeRoh, representing the City of Stanley. Commissioner Doug Bratvold joined the meeting at 8:50 a.m. Also present were Mountrail County Planning & Zoning Administrator Melissa Vachal, Mountrail County Planning & Zoning Assistant Malinda Gunderson, Mountrail County State's Attorney Wade Enget, Mountrail County Tax Equalization Director Kim Savage, Mountrail County Property Assessor Lisa Wolla and Mountrail County Auditor Stephanie Pappa.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Commissioner Borud, seconded by Commissioner Weyrauch, to approve the agenda as amended. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Commissioner Borud, seconded by Commissioner Tomjack, to approve the Planning & Zoning Commission minutes of the November 24, 2025 meeting as corrected. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

1. 8:35 a.m. Clay & Ashley Pappa & Gravel Inc.; Discussion Regarding Application Signatures

Mr. Abel was present to discuss with the board applications where the surface owner doesn't own the gravel but applicants are still being required to get their signatures on applications and finalized permits. State's Attorney Enget referenced Article 5, Section 5.2, Subsection C-12 of the Mountrail County Land Development Code, which requires written easement for ingress and egress to the property from the fee owner(s) of the real property and Article 5, Section 5.2, Subsection C-2 which requires that evidence of a reclamation or non-reclamation agreement with the surface owner must accompany the Conditional Use Permit application. Chairman Sorenson would like landowner involved.

Commissioner Ruland doesn't want the board to be forcing a landowner into an agreement.

Temporary Water Permits – Non-Transferable Renewals – For Board Information Only

Claude & Patricia Sem – State Water Permit #ND2025-23375 / PZ-2025-0381.

Claude & Patricia Sem – Applicant/Landowner. NW 1/4 NE 1/4 (Gov't Lot 1) of Section 7, Township 158 North, Range 92 West (Powers Township). Period of Authorized usage: 12/01/2026 through 12/31/2026. Parcel #04-0001600.

ministrator.

Schenk LLC – State Water Permit #7015 / PZ-2025-0386 Schenk LLC – Applicant. Bartelson Investments LLLP – Landowner. SW 1/4 of Section 4, Township 152 North, Range 90 West (Parshall Township). Period of Authorized usage: 01/01/2026 through 12/31/2026. Parcel #44-0001600.

Building Permits 2461-2464

2461 – PZ-2025-0351 – Clay & Ashley Pappa – Applicant. Richard Jorgenson – Landowner. Parcel #06-0003500. SE 1/4 NW 1/4 of Section 7, Township 158 North, Range 93 West (Powers Lake Township) 1920 sq ft modular home. Pending approval of CUP.

2462 – PZ-2025-0353 – Lorna & Joel Hansen – Applicant. Mountrail County Park Commission – Landowner. Parcel #45-0019216. Block 18, Lot 9 of Trynor Park located in the S 1/2 SW 1/4 of Section 29 & NW 1/4 of Section 32, Township 152 North, Range 91 West. (Van Hook Township) 29'x40' storage garage & 12'x30' covered deck.

2463 – PZ-2025-0385 – MasTec o/b/o T-Mobile – Applicant. Kelly & Judy Abramson – Landowner. Parcel #22-0016700. NW 1/4 NW 1/4 of Section 35, Township 155 North, Range 88 West. (Kickapoo Township) Cell tower modifications.

2464 – PZ-2025-0387 – Kayla Salgado – Applicant. Salgado Estates LLC – Landowner. Parcel #18-0004220. A tract of land to be known as Lot B of the Replat of Schmidt's Country Estates located in the S 1/2 NE 1/4 of Section 9, Township 156 North, Range 91 West. (Idaho Township) 34'x32' garage & two decks 1 - 20'x15' & 1 - 20'x20'.

Moved by Commissioner Borud, seconded by Commissioner Tomjack, to approve building permits 2461-2464. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

ONGOING BUSINESS

Gravel Pits-remains ongoing-Conditional Use Permit checklist has been

Green Acres Subdivision-Hyrum Zetting-plan of action for Green Acres Subdivision.

Data Centers-currently under moratorium

Battery Storage Facilities-currently under moratorium

STAFF UPDATES

* Administrator Vachal presented the board with the working documents on data centers and battery energy storage systems. These were for informational and discussion purposes only and Administrator Vachal will not be looking for a motion at this time. SRF Consulting will be present for January's meeting to present everything to the board. Incompte.com has reached out to Administration to inquire about Mountrail County's data center regulations and they have been informed a moratorium is still in place and the regulations are currently being worked on.

* Administration is having issues with getting the finalized paperwork for the Temporary Fresh Water Industrial Use Permit only – Permit Number – State Water Permit #ND2025-23046 / PZ-2025-0343. Pumping of industrial water by lay flat hose: EOG Resources Inc – Applicant. Roger & Darlene Vesey – Landowner. SE 1/4 SW 1/4 (Gov't Lot 9) of Section 18, Township 155 North, Range 89 West (McAlmond Township) ending in the SW 1/4 of Section 9, Township 153 North, Range 90 West (Wayzata Township). Period of Authorized usage: 12/03/2025 through 12/01/2026. Parcel #05-0004100. Approved by P&Z Administrator.

EOG Resources Inc – Lay Flat Hose Permit only – Permit Number – State Water Permit #ND2025-23046 / PZ-2025-0343. Pumping of industrial water by lay flat hose: EOG Resources Inc – Applicant. Roger & Darlene Vesey – Landowner. Ties in with hose permit #PZ-2025-0343 at NW 1/4 of Section 11, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township) ending in the SE 1/4 of Section 10, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township). Period of Authorized usage: 12/01/2025 through 01/01/2026. Approved by P&Z Administrator.

Select Water Solutions LLC – Lay Flat Hose Permit only – Permit Number – State Water Permit #7046 / PZ-2025-0347. Pumping of industrial water by lay flat hose: Select Water Solutions LLC – Applicant. POD is in Williams County. Ties in with hose permit #PZ-2025-0347 at NW 1/4 of Section 11, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township) ending in the SE 1/4 of Section 10, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township). Period of Authorized usage: 12/01/2025 through 01/01/2026. Approved by P&Z Administrator.

EOG Resources Inc – Lay Flat Hose Permit only – Permit Number – State Water Permit #7046 / PZ-2025-0348. Pumping of industrial water by lay flat hose: Select Water Solutions LLC – Applicant. POD is in Williams County. Ties in with hose permit #PZ-2025-0347 at NW 1/4 of Section 11, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township) ending in the SE 1/4 of Section 10, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township). Period of Authorized usage: 12/01/2025 through 01/01/2026. Approved by P&Z Administrator.

Select Water Solutions LLC – Lay Flat Hose Permit only – Permit Number – State Water Permit #7046 / PZ-2025-0349. Pumping of industrial water by lay flat hose: Select Water Solutions LLC – Applicant. POD is in Williams County. Ties in with hose permit #PZ-2025-0347 at NW 1/4 of Section 11, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township) ending in the SE 1/4 of Section 10, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township). Period of Authorized usage: 12/01/2025 through 01/01/2026. Approved by P&Z Administrator.

Select Water Solutions LLC – Lay Flat Hose Permit only – Permit Number – State Water Permit #7046 / PZ-2025-0350. Pumping of industrial water by lay flat hose: Select Water Solutions LLC – Applicant. POD is in Williams County. Ties in with hose permit #PZ-2025-0347 at NW 1/4 of Section 11, Township 154 North, Range 90 West (Austin Township) ending in the SE